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SUBJECT: DJIBOUTIAN NATIONAL DAY: FLYING THE FLAG AND THANKING
FRANCE

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. With tensions still running high on the Djibouti-Eritrea border, the GODJ marked Djiboutian National Day on June 27 with modest celebrations, thanks to allies, and a renewed appeal for national solidarity. Although a large portion of Djibouti's armed forces are deployed near the border area, a planned military parade in the capital went on as planned, with good attendance and participation. In his annual national day address, President Guelleh called for redoubled efforts to fight poverty and ensure that all Djiboutians benefit from economic growth. Guelleh also promised that Djibouti would continue to protect her territorial integrity, and thanked Djibouti's allies--and in particular France--for support during the ongoing border dispute.
END SUMMARY.

MILITARY PARADE: A GOOD SHOWING

¶2. (SBU) National Day festivities kicked off at 6am June 27 with a parade at Camp Cheik Osman in Djibouti City. Military leaders in attendance included Minister of Defense Ougoureh Kifleh Ahmed, Chief of the President's Military Cabinet Hassan Said Kaireh, CHOD MG Fathi Ahmed Houssein, Deputy Chief of Staff BG Hassan Ali Kamil, and East African Standby Brigade Commander and Djibouti Military Director of International Relations BG Osman Nour Soubagleh. Noticeably absent were Chief of Staff MG Zakaria Cheik Ibrahim and Navy Commander COL Abdourahman Aden Cher, who were presumably monitoring operations at the Djibouti-Eritrea border.

¶3. (SBU) Approximately 700 military and 300 Gendarmes, police, and firefighters marched in the parade. The parading troops displayed U.S. equipment (including approximately 15 Humvees, some with U.S. 50 Caliber M2 machine guns, and several FMTV class trucks), and French equipment (including several Vehicule de l'Avant Blinde (VAB) or similar wheeled armored personnel carriers, and several Vehicule Blinde Leger (VBL) or similar light armored vehicles, unidentified truck-mounted rocket launchers, and assorted trucks.)

DJIBOUTI WILL PROTECT
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

¶4. (U) At a 10am reception at his official residence, President Guelleh gave a short address, which was carried live by state-run media. Guelleh began by thanking the armed forces of Djibouti for their dedication in the face of "Eritrean military aggression". Citing Djibouti's "essential and fundamental values" of "peace, liberty, fraternity, and unity," Guelleh said that Djibouti would not be drawn into the "logic of war" by Eritrea. Guelleh affirmed Djibouti's willingness to seek a diplomatic solution by all available means, but also said that Djiboutians would "never tolerate" a threat to the "integrity of our national territory."

FIGHTING THE "TWO SPEED" SOCIETY

15. (U) The meat of President Guelleh's speech focused on the fight against poverty in Djibouti. Guelleh outlined the achievements of his administration, pointing to "palpable and tangible" improvements in health and education. At the same time, he called for renewed efforts to include "our compatriots who feel marginalized and excluded from our rediscovered economic growth," saying that it was the "responsibility of the government not to accept the installation of a 'two-speed' society" in Djibouti. He outlined the continued work of the GODJ's National Social Development Initiative to address these disparities.

16. (U) Evoking rising oil and food prices, Guelleh denounced speculation and called for more help from developed countries to the developing world. He also summarized the GODJ's efforts to increase energy and food security, including wind and geothermal energy projects, a planned connection with the Ethiopian electricity grid, and agreements with Sudan and Ethiopia to grow crops on their territory for Djiboutian consumption.

EXPLICIT THANKS TO FRANCE

17. (U) In previous years, Guelleh has delivered his speech in Arabic. This year, Guelleh spoke in French, and explicitly thanked France twice--once singling out France for support during the ongoing Djibouti-Eritrea border situation, and once personally thanking President Sarkozy for his "courage and will to help create

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a Palestinian state."

18. (SBU) COMMENT: Several of President Guelleh's points about the need for all Djiboutians to benefit from economic growth and investment could have been taken directly from Post's Mission Strategic Plan. While the background of the border conflict gave Guelleh special reason to call for national unity and thank Djibouti's allies, his overall message highlighted longtime GODJ goals: poverty reduction and economic growth. END COMMENT.

LIST